

# THE OASIS.

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EDITED BY MRS. CHILD,  
AUTHOR OF "AN APPEAL IN FAVOR OF THAT CLASS OF  
AMERICANS CALLED AFRICANS."

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"Strike, but hear!"



"The Truth shall make us free."

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BOSTON:  
BENJAMIN C. BACON.  
1834.

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## BRIEF ACCOUNT OF AN EMANCIPATED SLAVE.

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF, AT THE REQUEST OF THE EDITOR.

DEAR MADAM;— I will try to write a short account of my life, as nearly as I can remember; though it makes me sorrowful to think of my past days; for they have been very dark and full of tears. I always longed and prayed for liberty, and had at times hopes that I should obtain it. I would pray, and try to study out some way to earn money enough to buy myself, by working in the night-time. But then something would happen to disappoint my hopes, and it seemed as though I must live and die a slave, with none to pity me.

I will begin as far back as I can remember. I think I was between two and three years old when the soul-destroyers tore me from my mother's arms, somewhere in Africa, far back from the sea. They carried me a long distance to a ship; all the way I looked back, and cried. The ship was full of men and women loaded with chains; but I was so small, they let me run about on deck.

After many long days, they brought us into Charleston, South Carolina. A slave-holder bought me,

and took me up into Pendleton County. I suppose that I staid with him about six months. He sold me to a Mr Bradley, by whose name I have ever since been called. This man was considered a wonderfully kind master ; and it is true that I was treated better than most of the slaves I knew. I never suffered for food, and never was flogged with the whip ; but, oh, my soul ! I was tormented with kicks and knocks more than I can tell. My master often knocked me down, when I was young. Once, when I was a boy, about nine years old, he struck me so hard that I fell down and lost my senses. I remained thus some time, and when I came to myself, he told me he thought he had killed me. At another time he struck me with a curry-comb, and sunk the knob into my head. I have said that I had food enough ; I wish I could say as much concerning my clothing. But I let that subject alone ; because I cannot think of any suitable words to use in telling you.

I used to work very hard. I was always obliged to be in the field by sunrise, and I labored till dark, stopping only at noon long enough to eat dinner. When I was about fifteen years old, I took what was called the cold plague, in consequence of being over-worked, and I was sick a long time. My master came to me one day, and hearing me groan with pain, he said, " This fellow will never be of any more use to me — I would as soon knock him in the head, as if he were an opossum." His children sometimes came in, and shook axes and knives at me, as if they were about to knock me on the head. But I have said enough of this. The Lord at length raised me up from the bed

of sickness, but I entirely lost the use of one of my ankles. Not long after this, my master moved to Arkansas Territory, and died. Then the family let me out; but after a while my mistress sent for me, to carry on the plantation, saying she could not do without me. My master had kept me ignorant of everything he could. I was never told anything about God, or my own soul. Yet from the time I was fourteen years old, I used to think a great deal about freedom. It was my heart's desire; I could not keep it out of my mind. Many a sleepless night I have spent in tears, because I was a slave. I looked back on all I had suffered — and when I looked ahead, all was dark and hopeless bondage. My heart ached to feel within me the life of liberty. After the death of my master, I began to contrive how I might buy myself. After toiling all day for my mistress, I used to sleep three or four hours, and then get up and work for myself the remainder of the night. I made collars for horses, out of plaited husks. I could weave one in about eight hours; and I generally took time enough from my sleep to make two collars in the course of a week. I sold them for fifty cents each. One summer, I tried to take two or three hours from my sleep every night; but I found that I grew weak, and I was obliged to sleep more. With my first money I bought a pig. The next year I earned for myself about thirteen dollars; and the next about thirty. There was a good deal of wild land in the neighborhood, that belonged to Congress. I used to go out with my hoe, and dig up little patches, which I planted with corn, and got up in the night to tend it. My hogs were

fattened with this corn, and I used to sell a number every year. Besides this, I used to raise small patches of tobacco, and sell it to buy more corn for my pigs. In this way I worked for five years; at the end of which time, after taking out my losses, I found that I had earned one hundred and sixty dollars. With this money I hired my own time for two years. During this period, I worked almost all the time, night and day. The hope of liberty strung my nerves, and braced up my soul so much, that I could do with very little sleep or rest. I could do a great deal more work than I was ever able to do before. At the end of the two years, I had earned three hundred dollars, besides feeding and clothing myself. I now bought my time for eighteen months longer, and went two hundred and fifty miles west, nearly into Texas, where I could make more money. Here I earned enough to buy myself; which I did in 1833, about one year ago. I paid for myself, including what I gave for my time, about seven hundred dollars.

As soon as I was free, I started for a free State. When I arrived in Cincinnati, I heard of Lane Seminary, about two miles out of the city. I had for years been praying to God that my dark mind might see the light of knowledge. I asked for admission into the Seminary. They pitied me, and granted my request, though I knew nothing of the studies which were required for admission. I am so ignorant, that I suppose it will take me two years to get up with the lowest class in the institution. But in all respects I am treated just as kindly, and as much like a brother by the students, as if my skin were as white, and my

education as good as their own. Thanks to the Lord, prejudice against color does not exist in Lane Seminary! If my life is spared, I shall probably spend several years here, and prepare to preach the gospel.

I will now mention a few things, that I could not conveniently bring in, as I was going along with my story.

In the year 1828, I saw some Christians, who talked with me concerning my soul, and the sinfulness of my nature. They told me I must repent, and live to do good. This led me to the cross of Christ;—and then, oh, how I longed to be able to read the Bible! I made out to get an old spelling-book, which I carried in my hat for many months, until I could spell pretty well, and read easy words. When I got up in the night to work, I used to read a few minutes, if I could manage to get a light. Indeed, every chance I could find, I worked away at my spelling-book. After I had learned to read a little, I wanted very much to learn to write; and I persuaded one of my young masters to teach me. But the second night, my mistress came in, bustled about, scolded her son, and called him out. I overheard her say to him, “You fool! what are you doing? If you teach him to write, he will write himself a pass and run away.” That was the end of my instruction in writing; but I persevered, and made marks of all sorts and shapes that I could think of. By turning every way, I was, after a long time, able to write tolerably plain.

I have said a good deal about my desire for freedom. How strange it is that anybody should believe any human being *could* be a slave, and yet be contented!

I do not believe there ever was a slave, who did not long for liberty. I know very well that slave-owners take a great deal of pains to make the people in the free States believe that the slaves are happy ; but I know, likewise, that I was never acquainted with a slave, however well he was treated, who did not long to be free. There is one thing about this, that people in the free States do not understand. When they ask slaves whether they wish for their liberty, they answer, "No ;" and very likely they will go so far as to say they would not leave their masters for the world. But, at the same time, they desire liberty more than anything else, and have, perhaps, all along been laying plans to get free. The truth is, if a slave shows any discontent, he is sure to be treated worse, and worked the harder for it ; and every slave knows this. This is why they are careful not to show any uneasiness when white men ask them about freedom. When they are alone by themselves, all their talk is about liberty — liberty ! It is the great thought and feeling that fills the mind full all the time.

I could say much more ; but as your letter requested a "short account" of my life, I am afraid I have written too much already. I will say but a few words more. My heart overflows when I hear what is doing for the poor broken-hearted slave, and free men of color. God will help those who take part with the oppressed. Yes, blessed be His holy name ! He will surely do it. Dear madam, I do hope I shall meet you at the resurrection of the just. God preserve you, and strengthen you in this holy cause, until the walls of prejudice are broken down, the chains burst



in pieces, and men of every color meet at the feet of Jesus, speaking kind words, and looking upon each other in love — willing to live together on earth, as they hope to live in Heaven!

JAMES BRADLEY.

*Lane Seminary, June, 1834.\**

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\* A letter from Theodore D. Weld, of the same institution, says: "We have established five day schools among the three thousand colored people of Cincinnati; a Lyceum with tri-weekly lectures; evening schools for teaching adults to read; Sabbath schools and Bible classes. We are also trying to establish a reading-room and library for them. I have never seen such eagerness to acquire knowledge, nor such rapidity of acquisition."

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### SAFE MODE OF OPERATION.

An old negro, who had once been a slave, was asked by a Boston clergyman whether he thought the slaves, if they were emancipated, would be disposed to injure their masters. He replied, "Oh, no! They would call down blessings upon them. On what does the planter *now* depend for safety? Why, he picks out some intelligent slave, and keeps him about his person; he feeds and clothes him well — flatters him, and calls him '*his boy*.' This slave sleeps near his master's chamber at night, and during the day keeps watch upon what is said and done by the other slaves, that he may report to his master. *This* is the way the planter consults his safety. Now, if he only would **make** '*boys*' of them all!"